

NSC BRIEFING

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BACKGROUND ON AFGHAN-SOVIET TRANSIT AGREEMENT

- I. Terms of agreement, as reported by various sources, apparently are
- A. Five-year agreement.
 - B. Reciprocal rights for transit of goods across signatories' territory.
 - C. Proposed Soviet route from free port (presumably Leningrad) to Termez on Afghan border.
 - D. Delivery guaranteed in 14 days transit time, goods to move in sealed cars.
 - E. Possible 10% reduction in Soviet rail rates.
 - F. Payment by Afghanistan either in Afghan currency or in barter.
- II. In addition, USSR assumed to be willing to absorb some of Afghan foreign trade made uneconomical by purchase from West and transported via USSR.

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III. However, Soviet capability to deliver in 14 days improbable; best estimate is 17 days for express traffic, 25 days for normal run.

IV. Use of Soviet route, even with reduced rail rates, probably considerably more expensive for Afghanistan than present arrangements.

A. Big majority (probably 75% or more) of Afghan trade with West.

V. Not yet proved that Afghans seriously intend to make use of transit agreement. More likely to employ it as bargaining point in dispute with Pakistan in hope of causing other nations to urge easing of Pakistani blockade.

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